

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A product information providing apparatus capable of transmitting/receiving data through a communication network, comprising:

5 a communication link to a product information management apparatus having product information management data;

a receiver for receiving, through said communication network from a remote terminal, a request command requesting transmission of product information management data related to a specified product;

10 wherein said communication link is effective for obtaining from said product information management apparatus, in response to said request command, the product information management data related to said specified product; and

a transmitter for transmitting the product information management data related to said specified product to said remote terminal.

15 2. A product information providing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said product information management data of said product information management apparatus includes status information in accordance with the progress of a design operation.

20 3. A product information providing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the type and amount of product information management data transmitted from said transmitter is dependent on the identification of the user of said remote terminal.

25 4. A product information providing method for obtaining product information management data from a product information management apparatus having said product information management data, said product information providing method being further effective for transmitting said product information management data through a communication network, said method comprising:

a receiving step of receiving, from a remote terminal through said communication network, a request command requesting transmission of product information management data concerning a specified product;

an obtaining step of obtaining from said product information management apparatus, the product information management data concerning said specified product in response to said request command; and

a transmitting step of transmitting to said remote terminal the obtained product information management data concerning said specified product.

5. A product information providing method according to Claim 4, wherein said product information management data of said product information management apparatus includes status information in accordance with the progress of a design operation.

6. A product information providing method according to Claim 4, wherein the type and amount of product information management data transmitted is dependent on the identification of the user of said remote terminal.

7. A computer program for causing a computer to execute the method steps as set forth in Claim 4.

8. A computer-readable recording medium having recorded therein the computer program as set forth in Claim 7.